



BEFORE THE DHARMA WHEEL TURNS, THE BELLY RUMBLES

The concept of worldly blessings in Buddhism can sometimes be a complicated issue, with some asserting that Buddhism is against any desire for material security and prosperity, and that all believers are to bear hardship with a stiff upper lip.

However, the truth is that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do wish for all lay believers to live a prosperous and fulfilling life, and that the means to attain happiness and wealth are clearly available within the sutras. The old saying that *Before the Dharma Wheel turns, the belly rumbles* is indeed true ; peace, prosperity and security is necessary for the Dharma to flourish—for few could maintain right mindfulness while besieged by a thousand anxieties, and few could give while crushed by poverty. Moreover, as is manifestly clear in this stressful era we now live in, almost nobody has mental peace and many are woefully short of money. In other words, our bellies are growling and our minds are troubled by uncertainty, by fear over the future, by dashed hopes and broken dreams.

Fortunately, in the Earth Store Sutra, there is a prominent and important verse that promises peace, security, prosperity, long life and blessings for any man, woman or child willing to listen:

“World Honored One, as I regard beings of the present and future, I see those who make shrines of clay, stone, bamboo, or wood and set them on pure ground in the southern part of their dwellings. They place within the shrines images of Earth Store Bodhisattva, either sculpted or painted, or made of gold, silver, copper, or iron. Then they burn incense, make offerings, behold, worship, and praise him. By doing those things, such people will receive ten kinds of benefits.

“What are those ten? First, their lands will be fertile. Second, their families and homes will always be peaceful. Third, their ancestors will be born in the heavens. Fourth, those of the current generation will enjoy benefits and long lives. Fifth, they will easily obtain what they want. Sixth, they will not encounter disasters of water and fire. Seventh, they will avoid unforeseen calamities. Eighth, they will never have nightmares. Ninth, they will be protected by spirits in their daily comings and goings. Tenth, they will create many causes that lead to Sagehood.

“World Honored One, beings of the present and future who make offerings in their homes in the prescribed manner will attain benefits like those.”

-Earth Store Sutra, Chp 11 (BTTS Translation)

Therefore, any person who sets up a shrine with an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva (Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva) in the most suitably available spot within the southern part of their residence, and who then regularly worships by praising, burning incense and making offerings of candles, fruits, flowers, vegetarian food and the like will reap the ten wondrous benefits outlined in the verse.

The references to various materials such as wood, bamboo, gold or copper are to make clear that there is no requirement for a specific quality or elaborateness, and that whatever material within means will suffice as long as there is sincerity. So the shrine could simply be a small table with a printed image on the wall. The reason that the southern side is preferred is because it is the direction karmic creditors usually linger.

Thus, if you faithfully do as instructed, you will have fertile lands (i.e. lucrative career and business opportunities) and peace and harmony at home. Your departed ancestors will be blessed and rise to Heavenly rebirth while your living parents and family members will have their lifespans and happiness extended. Most importantly, your hopes and dreams (such as for property, a spouse or children) will be realized. You will encounter neither fires nor floods and be untouched by any unforeseen disaster. At night, no evil dreams will trouble you and protector spirits will shadow you at all times. Lastly, the merit generated will result in future opportunities to transcend the Samsara and attain Bodhi.

By planting praises and offerings to Earth Store Bodhisattva, unlimited blessings will rain down from the heavens! Fitting reward for faithful piety and sincerity.

Instructions:

For your convenience, a poster image of Earth Store Bodhisattva is included at the end of this text and an Earth Store Ode is included on the next page. Please print out the image and set it upon a suitable site on the southern side of your residence, and place before it candles and offerings. Everyday, light incense, offer praise by reciting the Earth Store Ode, and bow reverently before the Bodhisattva. Do so and peace, prosperity, health and security will dawn upon your household!

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EARTH STORE ODE

O Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva !
Thou are wondrous beyond compare,
August is your ethereal appearance,
Aurulent is your demeanor,
Great are your vows and lyrical is
Your Lyre of Dharma
Which you play with grace,
Adorning the Samsara with
Harmonious sounds of Dharma,
Thou are mercy embodied,
The shade of grace for all beings,
The light of your pearl mounts up to the Heavens
And your golden khakkhara shatters the gates of Hell!
Guiding beings mired in Gordian knot of karma
To bow before the Nine Blossom Dais of the Buddha,
Thou are the Beacon of Light for those in perdition,
The one who pardons and blesses,
Honored as the Great Peak of Nine Blossoms,
Namo Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva!
Namo Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva!
Namo Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva!

NAMO KSITIGARBHA BODHISATTVA

